

Review Essay

Is American Liberalism Singular or Plural?

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REINVENTING “THE PEOPLE”: The Progressive Movement, The Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism. By Shelton Stromquist. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2006.

THE LEADER AND THE CROWD: Democracy in American Public Discourse, 1880-1941. By Daria Frezza. Translated by Martha King. Athens: University of Georgia Press. 2007.

THE LOST PROMISE OF PATRIOTISM: Debating American Identity, 1890-1920. By Jonathan M. Hansen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2003.

In researching *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935*, Robyn Muncy looked for an alternative to the highly specialized, scientific, and often market-oriented professionalism that appears to have become the dominant prototype quite early in the twentieth century. Her study became, she said, a search for “some model for being a professional and a committed democrat,” one that would “square” the authority of professional credentials “with a feminist’s commitment to non-hierarchical relationships [and] participatory democracy.” She came close to finding such a model in the “female professionalism” invented by women who founded and lived in the urban settlement houses.¹

Muncy’s search replicates a normatively inspired historiography recommended by Van Wyck Brooks—a literary critic and contemporary of these progressive women. Repelled by the acquisitive individualism of America’s

“bustling commercial democracy” as well as an alleged dearth of public moral and aesthetic ideals, Brooks suggested a remedy in an article in *The Dial* in 1918. He suggested that America’s literary history, more specifically what F. O. Matthiessen in his *American Renaissance* (1941) called “the age of Emerson and Whitman,” was “an inexhaustible storehouse of apt attitudes and adaptable ideals.” Properly understood and appropriated, these attitudes and ideals could be essential resources for an “ethic of personal growth” and a basis for criticism of America’s “commercial and moralistic mind.”² Brooks’s criticism of popular culture may be construed as elitist and his remedy only a tonic for a few alienated intellectuals, but the project of constructing a “useable past” has had continuing resonance among American historians. Warren Susman traced the salience of this project among historians in two 1960 essays.³ In the late 1960s and early 1970s the discovery of a republican tradition—yet another useable past—instantiated among the Founders and then in the “chants democratic” of the working class throughout the nineteenth century, enabled criticism of an allegedly monolithic liberal tradition classically chronicled and analyzed by Louis Hartz in 1955. This was a discovery that could not be contained within the discipline of American history. America’s republican past has since become a normative resource of social and cultural criticism among political theorists and sociologists.⁴

The recovery of American republicanism has also influenced historians looking for a useable past among progressives between the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the end of World War I. Driven in part by an interest in current political and intellectual issues, these historians have sought to reconstruct the historical roots of a critical perspective that could clarify the normative significance of these concerns. The recent work of Mary Furner provides a good example. Furner has discovered a distinct strain of “new liberalism” during this period—one that differs markedly in its republican and democratic values from both the “corporate” strain of liberalism that emerged at the same time, and from current neo-liberalism “underway since the 1970s, with the ‘return of the market,’ the unprecedented sway of neoclassicism, and the multidisciplinary appeal of rational choice theory.”⁵ In 1986, as New Deal liberalism retreated before the ascendancy of the New Right in both Great Britain and the United States, James Kloppenberg published a detailed analysis of the republican and social democratic wing of American progressivism.⁶ Kloppenberg’s interpretation complements Furner’s in that both have detected and reconstructed a strain of robustly democratic-republican liberalism at odds not only with market liberalisms old and new, but also with the corporate, managerial, and weakly democratic liberalism that dominated American politics from the end of World War II through the mid-1970s. Of course the history that Furner and Kloppenberg have recovered is a bad memory for neo-liberals and neo-conservatives. But for others who share the ideals of these republican and social democratic progressives, it is a history of their own political roots.

The authors of the books under review have probed the Progressive Era for a useable past. Two of the three authors—Shelton Stromquist and Jonathan

Hansen—build upon the work of historians responsible for the recovery of republican themes in America's political culture. Although Daria Frezza—on the history faculty of the University of Siena—treats aspects of progressivism that also interest Stromquist and Hansen, he does not draw upon the legacy of republicanism for insight. Nevertheless, like Hansen, Frezza finds in pragmatism and cultural pluralism a useful antidote to the racism and nativism that Stromquist believes characterizes the mainstream of the progressive movement.

Like Furner and Kloppenberg, Stromquist argues that this movement provided the opening statement of the ideals and principles of a "new liberalism" that would eventually inform the institutions of the New Deal and the Great Society only to be pushed to the political margins in the closing decades of the twentieth century (191, 202-04). Progressivism "constituted itself in response to the mounting social crisis of the late nineteenth century . . . most clearly revealed in the battles between labor and capital and in the campaign to save wasted lives produced by industrial growth" (3; see also 8-9, 16, 36). Stromquist targets for criticism a couple of related themes at the core of this movement that become, for him, definitive of modern liberalism. One is a vision of "classless social harmony" (7; see also 23, 34, 51, 55, 194). Another is a discourse about democratic renewal in capitalist America that downplayed the importance of social class and class divisions (viii, 10-11, 16, 44, 84, 130, 167, 181, 202-04). Commitment to these ideas was linked to the proposition that social and economic reform did not depend upon alteration of "the fundamental structures of social power and property." Instead, they would rely upon the ameliorating effects of rapid economic growth and "socially responsible behavior by capital, enforced where necessary through legislation and state regulation" (4, 5; see also 6, 10, 23, 74, 181-82). Unlike Furner, Stromquist does not differentiate progressive liberalism into two distinct strains—the one more friendly to the corporate reconstruction of the economy; the other more social democratic and critical of capitalism.

While the dismissal of class analysis was definitive of the progressive-liberal mainstream, Stromquist insists there was an alternative approach to social reform and democratic renewal. The initial carriers of this alternative were Populists and the Knights of Labor. These "self-styled . . . 'producers' [articulated] a *working-class* republican critique of acquisitive individualism [and argued for] . . . a more radical agenda [of] reform . . . based on a fundamental redistribution of class power . . . [that] challenged the premise of those who promoted social harmony" (5, 35; see also 13, 23, 59, 82). Producer republicanism and the belief that class-based power associated with corporate restructuring was the chief impediment to reform influenced a wing of the progressive movement Stromquist labels "labor progressives." These reformers "stood outside the narrow trade unionism of the American Federation of Labor leadership" and "believed only a mobilized and politicized working class was capable of challenging entrenched class power" (9, viii; see also 3, 5, 16, 166, 177, 181, 186-87, 198). The views of Frank Walsh, chair of the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations (USCIR), 1913-15, were representative of this wing of progressivism. Walsh was impatient with academic

proponents of labor arbitration. He discounted a legalistic approach to amelioration of class conflict and, as an advocate for democratizing the workplace, he argued that “the man who toils is little more than [a] slave unless he has a voice in the conditions of labor” (181; see also 10, 166, 176-77, 186, 198-201). As an alternative to mainstream progressivism and the liberalism it spawned, these carriers of producer republicanism constitute, for Stromquist, the useable past of the progressive era. The closing lines of his book call for a “new politics of class that might reclaim the producerist legacy of the nineteenth century and challenge the entrenched power of the rich and their allies” (204).⁷

Stromquist tells us very little about the *republicanism* of this producerist legacy. He is aware that economic dependence and having one’s livelihood and well-being depend upon the arbitrary will of another is incompatible with republican citizenship. Cognizance of this incompatibility led to producerist criticism of “wage slavery” (5; see also 181).⁸ Stromquist quotes labor reformer George McNeil who, in 1886, spoke of “the wage-system [conflicting with] the republican system of government . . . and . . . soulless monopol[ies] crushing the manhood out of sovereign citizens” (13). Doubtless this republican contradiction between economic dependence and robust citizenship motivated Laurence Gronlund’s socialist argument that the state “functioned as the peoples’ instrument ‘to redress natural defects and inequalities.’” (73). My sense is that it is not so much the republicanism of this “producerist legacy” that interests Stromquist, but rather the class-consciousness and class-based politics that it represents.

In this regard it is interesting that Stromquist has more to say about the republicanism of mainstream progressivism—the movement for which he has little sympathy. Progressives, he states, “imagined ‘the people’ as a civic community in which class would lose its meaning” (viii; see also 4, 34, 55, 56, 166, 194). Moreover, the “notion of citizenship was drained of nineteenth-century producerist class partisanship” (viii). Stromquist recognizes citizenship and the notion of a sovereign people to whom the government is accountable as fundamental concepts of traditional republican self-rule. Moreover, progressive rhetoric incorporating “public virtue” and “the common good as a social ideal”—even their concern for “structural inequality”—had republican roots (4). What the progressives did was “reinvent” or “recast” republican principles “in a crucible of class conflict” (3).⁹

The Achilles heal of the producerist legacy was the “ethnic and racial consciousness [that] shattered any broader sense of class identity” (133). Although Stromquist does not make the point, the continuing salience of ethnic and racial prejudice among workers *to this day* may make the political appropriation of this legacy extremely difficult.¹⁰ Much of his book, however, is devoted not to the racism and nativism of workers during the Progressive era, but rather to their presence among mainstream progressives. These biases along with class-based arrogance, Stromquist believes, narrowed significantly their views of social reform and democratic-republican renewal.

For the core of progressivism, the “social groups most susceptible to corruption [were] “identified . . . as a ‘submerged’ tenth of shiftless laborers, new immigrants, and African Americans” (34; see also 132). Without appropriate cultural assimilation, progressives believed only harm could come from the democratic empowerment of these groups “to reclaim the wealth it created and to realign the structures of power that produced inequality” (5). Cultural assimilation, however, meant “assimilation to [middle-class] whiteness” (132). Even the “maternalist reform agenda” of late nineteenth and early twentieth century “middle-class women’s activism was deeply infected with race and class prejudice” (110; see also 106-07, 110, 148-49). “Elite women [among these reformers] marginalized the class concerns of [female] trade unionists” (129-30). Jane Addams, the icon of the settlement house’s female dominion, was not immune to these biases (1-2, 150, 161-62). Progressive social scientists Simon Patten, E. A. Ross, and John R. Commons were also infected (132-33, 135-37). Like Patten, mainstream progressives believed “racial and ethnic differences would impede . . . progress [toward] building a democratic community” (131; see also 138). Many were attracted to eugenics and saw it as a “useful ‘scientific’ tool for improving” the racial stock of those groups most susceptible of corruption. Condescension, even contempt, for poor folks who did not measure up to middle-class, Anglo-Saxon standards resulted in arguments for narrowing the boundaries of the democratic public. “New immigrants, African Americans, and the laboring poor generally,” it was believed, “had not been adequately prepared to exercise the responsibilities of citizenship” (67; see also 4-5, 7, 9, 70, 130-33, 164, 200). Jane Addams’ Hull House colleagues, Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge thought “immigrant children . . . must . . . be trained into a ‘civic life that has grown out of American experience and Anglo-Saxon tradition’” (148; see also 149).

For Stromquist, these attitudes and their implications for public policy severely weaken the appeal of progressive proposals for republican-inspired democratic renewal. Nevertheless, even as the politics of reform during this period was dominated by an anxious progressivism, there were four opposing voices that Stromquist highlights. One was the voice of Horace Kallen. In opposition to the progressive core, Kallen believed that the preservation of ethnic and cultural diversity would strengthen, not weaken, American democracy. Progressives, Kallen thought, were more troubled by “difference” than by inequality (139-40). Also in opposition was the voice of W. E. B. Du Bois. His appeal for the rights of citizenship for blacks, and his assertion that blacks could be good citizens without having to lose their racial identity, challenged the progressive stand on cultural assimilation and its opposition to expanding the franchise (156, 160, 163-64). A third critical voice from the discipline of anthropology, that of Franz Boas, “debunked popular notions of racial inferiority” (154). Finally, there was the voice of Frank Walsh, “an iconic figure to the producerist and socialist wings of the labor movement” and to labor-friendly reformers who constituted the progressive left wing. As chair of the USCIR, Walsh was contemptuous of fellow commissioner John R. Commons’ “legalistic approach” to the investiga-

tion of the “causes of industrial unrest.” It was an approach, Walsh believed, in which the “fundamentals” of class-based power in the public sphere and inside the workplace “remain[ed] largely untouched” (166; see also 176-77, 186).

While Stromquist and Hansen end their books with the fragmentation of progressivism after World War I, Daria Frezza extends his analysis through the 1920s and 1930s. The first half of Frezza’s book, however, treats the period that is the focus for the other two authors. Indeed, it corroborates and complements aspects of Stromquist’s interpretation while correcting others. Progressivism, however, is not Frezza’s principal concern. Instead he is interested in how the idea of democracy was influenced between 1880 and 1941 first by conservative ideas of “the masses” and then, beginning in the 1890s, by European theories of crowd psychology—especially the French school of Gustave Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde (3-4, 19, 51). These theories used “concepts . . . from the fields of criminal anthropology and psychiatric pathology in order to understand collective behavior” (52). Crowds and mobs were considered deviant entities that overpowered participating individuals by shutting down moral sensibilities and generating a collective “explosion of primitive and irrational impulses” that under normal circumstances were under control (53, 55).

The influence of crowd psychology was mediated not only by academic and public intellectuals who appropriated the theory but also by the burgeoning advertising industry. Mass marketers extrapolated techniques for conditioning mass tastes and consumption from this body of theory (11, 98, 128, 136-37). During the Great War, Frezza argues, similar techniques were used by the U. S. government’s Committee on Public Information (CPI) to mobilize mass support for American participation (125-27). Finally, in the 1930s, social psychologists used crowd theory to understand the rapport between European dictators and crowds of supporters (68).

At the beginning of Frezza’s story, the nativist middle class associated democracy with a rational, white, male, public—the equivalent to the sovereign “people” (2-3, 12-15, 60, 63). Outside the boundaries of this narrow citizenry were anonymous masses which, from time to time, congealed into irrational mobs or rebellious crowds “whose behavior was [likened to] that of women, savages, and children” (3; see also 20-21, 23, 54, 55, 60, 70-71, 97). The latter, because of their “irrational thinking and emotionalism . . . represented the three groups most easily swayed by . . . the ‘mental contagion’ [of mobs]” (68). By the end of the war social scientists who had worked for the CPI became troubled about the prospects for democracy given new techniques for manipulating public opinion. What was alarming was “the possibility that irrational [behavior] could erupt within [a] democratic public” (98; see also 126, 128). The differentiation of rational publics and irrational crowds collapsed since the behavior of both could be shaped by leaders who used the techniques of persuasion pioneered by advertising. The last half of Frezza’s book traces the fallout of this collapse during the 1920s and 1930s. Skepticism regarding the rationality of ordinary citizens “gave credence to the idea of the popular masses as incapable of judging

their own interests rationally” (145; see also 170-71). Skepticism regarding the competence of the common man suggested “a reexamination of . . . ‘government by the people’” (143; see also 146-48). Political scientists called for an overhaul of democratic theory. They argued for a value-neutral, science-based conception, one that took into account recently discovered realities of collective behavior and the need for expertise insulated from politics. The revisionist result was an idea of democracy that did not depend upon a rational public. Instead, all it required was periodic competition among contending elites for the vote of an amorphous electorate. Frezza treats this democratic revisionism in the context of the rise of European dictatorships—regimes that reproduced themselves not only through the use of terror, but also through the manipulative techniques of mass persuasion. Confronted with this growing threat, American revisionists were forced to shelve their skepticism and value-neutrality and defend the normative basis of their weakened and elitist conception of democracy (129, 142-43, 145-48, 170, 174-75, 191, 211-15).

Frezza has written a well-researched and compelling book, the first half of which, as previously stated, complements and corrects Stromquist’s analysis. The latter emphasized the pervasive racism and ethnic prejudice at the core of progressivism. The integrity of the white, male public could be preserved only if “new immigrants, African Americans, and the laboring poor”—“constituencies most susceptible to corruption”—were disempowered (Stromquist 2006, 67-8; see also 70, 130-33, 164).¹¹ While Frezza appreciates and expands upon the underlying racism, his analysis of the influence of crowd psychology adds an additional dimension to the class-based arrogance and exclusionary attitudes of mainstream progressivism (3, 15, 29, 41-43, 48-49, 65-66, 112-13). “The language of race deeply marked the boundaries of U. S. citizenship and intertwined with the new theories of crowd psychology developed in Europe” (51). The appropriation of these theories by some Americans was relatively easy because racism and class-based arrogance were integrated into these theories. They provided more conservative progressives “a [conceptual] grid through which to [interpret] the behavior of the ‘dangerous classes’ seen as a potential threat [both] to social stability” and to the liberal traditions of Anglo-Saxon societies (53; see also 55, 56, 65). Finally crowd theory reinforced traditional male views of women. Le Bon called attention to the “feminine nature” of the crowd which, like “the mob, women, and savages, had no legitimacy as a responsible collective subject because of its mutability and irrationality” (68).

Stromquist argues that progressives, unlike producer republicans, could not bring themselves to recognize the stark class divisions produced by an essentially unregulated capitalist economy. Likewise, Frezza notices the same blind spot especially among social scientists. Class analysis was associated correctly with socialist doctrine, but scholars such as Albion Small, Franklin Giddings, and E. A. Ross believed “an analysis that placed the concept of class at its center would not apply” to the comparatively more socially mobile American society (32). Instead of viewing politics as a manifestation of class conflict, progressive

social scientists were drawn to interest-group theories. Not atypical was the sociologist Small who defined the new discipline as “the study of the process of association in groups, a pluralistic process of conflict and accommodation that issued in wider harmony” (40; see also 103-04).

According to Stromquist, the theme of social harmony that ultimately nullifies class conflict is at the core of the progressive mainstream. Frezza identifies this theme among progressives too. But he offers a correction to Stromquist’s analysis by noting that the rhetoric of social harmony was not exclusively progressive. Before the war John D. Rockefeller had argued for the “harmony of interests” between capital and labor. The argument among some employers for company unions as an alternative to trade unions, which allegedly only inflamed class-based animosity, was based on an assumed underlying harmony (152, 155-56).¹² The “ideal of classless social harmony” (Stromquist 7, 23) may be, as Stromquist argues, definitive of the progressive mainstream, but it is not a feature that differentiates this movement from capitalists and their minions. Moreover, although Frezza does not address this issue, the ideal of social harmony is not a feature that differentiates progressivism from producer republicanism either. After a close reading of the literature on this topic, Robert Westbrook states, “The crucial social division for producerists was thus not between employers and employees, capital and labor, but between productive and unproductive labor.” Even as Eugene Debs’ criticism of corporate capitalism was turning more radical, he brought to the Pullman strike in 1894 the producer republican belief in “the common interests of labor and capital.”¹³

Like Stromquist, Frezza recognizes the opposition voices of Kallen and Du Bois (Frezza 15, 89-91). His analysis of Boas’s criticism of racism and of Anglo-Saxon superiority, however, is much richer. Boas’s opposition plays a substantial role both in Frezza’s discussion of the progressive period before the Great War and in his analysis of the 1920s and 1930s. In a paper “The Mind of Primitive Man” published in 1901 and in a book of the same title published in 1911, he rejected accounts of racial hierarchies that placed “savages” with their so-called primitive minds on the lowest evolutionary rung. Rather, with respect to essential mental functions, there was a rough equality among racial groups across time. The differentiating factor was “culture” not “mind” whose definitive characteristics remained essentially the same across a plethora of historically different cultures. Boas not only served as an oppositional voice to the racist and anti-immigrant attitudes to which Stromquist is also alert, but also to the racism inherent in the likening of crowd behavior to non-civilized savages. Here also Boas was explicitly opposed to the racism of American imperialism (recognized also by Stromquist, 140) whose purpose, among others, was to bring “civilization” to “savages” in Cuba, the Philippines, and elsewhere (92-93; see also 43-44, 46-47, 71-72).

There is for Frezza another set of voices, opposed not only to the political conservatism and racism of the French school of crowd psychology, but also to the psychological theory of this school. Charles Horton Cooley complained

of the “frantic, dogmatic, psychological defense of laissez-faire’ in Le Bon’s work” (57).¹⁴ William James called attention to Le Bon’s “Anglomania” and was annoyed by his anti-socialism (56, 57). According to Frezza, however, neither Cooley nor James was totally at odds with Le Bon’s perspective. Cooley’s idea of the “social self” carried “Anglo-Saxon racial connotations” (61, 101). For his part, James “adopted a position quite similar to Le Bon’s on the savage and destructive instincts that in each us represent our heritage from the primitive ages, poised to reawaken in the anonymity of the crowd” (72; see also 70).

The one consistently oppositional voice for Frezza was that of John Dewey. His opposition spans the period that occupies Stromquist and Hansen as well as the 1920s and 1930s. First, in the face of the equation of children with savages, Dewey celebrated the mind of the child in *Democracy and Education* published in 1916 (72). Second, Dewey was a strong democrat before and after the Great War. He recognized the eclipse of the public in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) and was sympathetic to Walter Lippmann’s diagnosis of American political conditions in *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1927). Unlike Lippmann’s solution which was a pacified and passive electorate in a procedural democracy controlled by experts, Dewey called for a revitalization of associational life in primary groups—here he recognized the contributions of Cooley—and for an education of active citizens that cultivated their common capacities for political judgment (98, 99, 120, 187, 213). Lippmann was disillusioned during and after the War by the power of propaganda to manipulate public opinion. Only the advanced education of experts and elites could resist this power. Dewey was more optimistic both about the critical faculties of ordinary citizens and about the efficacy of a well-structured, basic education.

Finally, Dewey was critical of Le Bon’s psychology and its implications for democracy. Frezza quotes *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922) where, in a footnote, Dewey argued that Le Bon, by “assimilat[ing] the psychology of democracy to the psychology of the crowd in overriding individual judgment show[ed] lack of psychological insight.”¹⁵ In Frezza’s reading of Dewey, what Le Bon failed to recognize was that a *cultivated*, that is to say, appropriately educated “habit” of reflection or “intelligence” was sufficient to prevent impulsive, unthinking submission to the crowd “mind.” It was also sufficient to prevent a “mechanical chain of stimulus-response” to both advertising and political propaganda (120).

Frezza’s analysis of these oppositional voices is insightful and indicates where his own sympathies lie. His analysis, however, could easily have been enriched by including references to several additional articles by Dewey and George Herbert Mead. Frezza might have noted that the anthropological contribution of Franz Boas in the first year of the twentieth century was reinforced in an early essay by Dewey. Frezza might also have pointed to the skepticism of Mead and Dewey regarding Gabriel Tarde’s contribution to the psychology of the “social self” (98-101, 115).¹⁶ Dewey’s “Interpretation of Savage Mind,” published in 1902, complements Boas’s piece on “The Mind of the Primitive” published the preceding year. Both essays rejected the idea of “superior races.”

Both argued that, whatever else may be said about cultural or racial differences, the “mind,” in Dewey’s words, “has a pattern, a scheme of arrangement in its constituent elements . . .” As an indicator of a common humanity, this pattern is an equalizer between so-called “savage” and “civilized” human beings.¹⁷

Frezza discusses the social self in the context of the contrast between education and propaganda—that is to say, the contrast between a cultivated reflexivity on one hand, and passive receptivity to “suggestion” or “blind imitation” on the other (99). The psychologist James Mark Baldwin argued that “the self of the individual’s self-consciousness is, in its materials and processes of formation, thoroughly social in its origins” (quoted in Frezza, 100). At this level of generality Mead was in agreement. That Baldwin relied upon Tarde’s concept of imitation, however, was problematic. “Tarde looked for a psychological mechanism which determined the individual through attitudes and manners of the community, and found this in imitation.”¹⁸ But “imitation,” Mead argued, “becomes comprehensible when there is a consciousness of other selves, and not before.” When those who “make imitation the means of getting the meaning of what others and we ourselves are doing, [they] seem to be . . . putting the cart before the horse.”¹⁹ In agreement with Cooley, Mead wrote, “The mind is not first individual and then social. The mind itself in the individual arises through communication.”²⁰ Imitation, then, when it occurred, presupposes some level of self-consciousness which arises through communication in tandem with a conscious of others.

For his part Dewey, in “The Need For Social Psychology” (1917), argued that the “French School” of Tarde [“Imitation”] and Le Bon [“Suggestibility”] had set social psychology on “the wrong track.” What Tarde and “those bizarre writings on the psychology of the crowd” did was “carry over into science the old popular . . . antithesis of the individual and the social . . .”²¹ Needed instead was a psychology of the self that recognized the reciprocal relations between protean minds and modifiable social environments. The outlines of such a psychology appeared in the first six chapters of *Democracy and Education* (1916) and it looked quite similar to the communication-based conceptions of self-formation in the writings of Cooley and Mead. True, our democracy as it currently exists, “is still so immature that its main effect is to multiply occasions for imitation” and the repetition of “acts without thought.” With the proper education, however, and the “constructive modification of our social institutions,” Dewey insisted, a stronger democracy could be built that stimulated among citizens “original thought and . . . action deliberately adjusted in advance to cope with new forces.”²²

In *The Lost Promise of Patriotism*, Jonathan Hansen joins Frezza in treating John Dewey as a major opponent of the racism and ethnic prejudice at the core of progressivism. In this regard, both historians differ significantly from Stromquist who places Dewey in the progressive mainstream. At best, Stromquist suggests, Dewey can be considered one of those marginal “liberal progressives” who “directed more attention to the treatment of immigrants than to restriction . . . , who saw the possibility of a more extended and less coercive assimilation process . . . [and who] affirmed a ‘cosmopolitan’ idea of American

nationality . . .” (Stromquist 2006, 7, 148-49, 195-96, 202). That said, Stromquist flirts with what Hansen calls a “scholarly failure to distinguish [E. A.] Ross’s cultural commitments from the attempt of Dewey to construct an educational curriculum and civic ideal that would prepare individuals for a life time of social reciprocity and democratic deliberation” (94).²³ “Social reciprocity” should not be confused with social harmony—the normative ideal Stromquist considers definitive of progressivism. Instead of eliding cultural, racial, ethnic, and status differences, democratic deliberation, based on mutual respect among interlocutors, offers a method of reaching agreement on how to address public problems that is compatible with republican self-government. The chief impediment to social reciprocity is not the presence of difference but rather an unacceptable level of inequality in economic and educational resources (xviii, xxi, 12). Stromquist argues that mainstream progressivism was opposed to extending the franchise to blacks and recent immigrants. By contrast, the progressives Hansen singles out favored extending the privileges and immunities of citizenship to all Americans “regardless of ethnic, racial, economic, or gender affiliation” (2; xv, xvii, xx, 129, 172).

Hansen’s book seeks an answer to the question, “What does it mean to be patriotic?” In addition it “poses the problem of U. S. *civic* identity”—that is to say, what does citizenship in America mean? Finally, these conundrums are linked to a third: “How does a country founded on liberal principles and composed of diverse cultures secure the solidarity required to safeguard individuality and promote social justice” (ix, xiv)? Like other historians looking for a useable past, Hansen is troubled by the current state of American political culture. He is troubled by narrow views of patriotism and citizenship, and by recent difficulties in “distinguishing democracy from mass consumption and mass consumption from liberalism” (xvii; see also 142). As his analysis of the Progressive Era unfolds, he discovers an unsatisfactory conception of patriotism competing with a normatively more appealing one. Hansen labels the appealing notion “cosmopolitan patriotism”—CP for purposes of this essay.

The current and popular equation of patriotism with military heroism and uncritical loyalty to government policy during times of war inspired Hansen’s search for an alternative (ix). He found the martial-valor/uncritical-loyalty conception and an early statement of CP in the debate between Theodore Roosevelt and William James over the compatibility of imperialism and republican principles (20-21). For both the crisis in the closing decade of the nineteenth century was not just an economic one with social and legal repercussions. It was also a moral crisis with profound implications for America’s political future. Both men were offended by a decline of civic virtue, crowded out, they thought, by the acquisitive individualism associated with corporate economic reconstruction and abetted by laissez-faire liberalism. Both “shared the sense that a century of economic development had left America vulnerable to . . . material decadence” (4). Both offered a republican solution to a crisis for which classical liberalism had no remedy (7, 12, 67, 69). Roosevelt’s imperialist project was no less repub-

lican than James's anti-imperialism. While Hansen does not state this explicitly, Roosevelt and James drew upon different strains within the republican tradition. Reliance on distinct republican roots was responsible for their differing conceptions of patriotism and citizenship.²⁴

Classical liberalism celebrated "the ideals of a commercial bourgeoisie." By contrast, Roosevelt drew upon the equally masculine republican ideals of a "warrior-political elite," a citizen army, and patriotism as a manly virtue (7, 24). The admittedly brutal subjugation of native "savages" while instituting "civilization" in the American West had been a national project worthy of these ideals. The closing of the frontier, however, required equally glorious projects if these ideals were not to disappear. For Roosevelt—and Hansen includes Woodrow Wilson in this narrative—there was a national destiny, a "manifest destiny," to pursue. It was a mission to "civilize the world" and thereby "shape the destiny of mankind." Moreover, in achieving this mission, "global cultural and political development [would have to] follow a single, universal model" (3).²⁵ If the American nation-state was to compete economically, geo-politically, and culturally on an equal basis with Britain, France, and Germany—empire-builders all—then imperialism was a necessary step forward. "In confronting Spain and quashing the Filipino resistance," Hansen argues, "Roosevelt recognized the project that would redeem American virtue and restore significance to American life" (22; see also 3, 12-13, 23-25). Roosevelt adhered to a strain of republicanism less committed to democracy than to what Hansen calls "organic nationalism." This was a perspective that venerated the state as the principal instrument for achieving the nation's destiny. It was a view that championed war and other policies that promoted national regeneration and America's stature in the world while subordinating "individual liberty, equal opportunity, and government by consent" (36; see also 18-19). Tied to organic nationalism was a view of citizenship and patriotism that valued less a citizen's intellectual autonomy in discerning the common good than his unquestioned obedience to state policy and self-sacrifice on its behalf. The soldier's "faith" and sacrifice in war was iconic for these nationalists. In words that would have pleased Roosevelt, Oliver Wendell Holmes said admiringly, this faith "leads a soldier to throw away his life in obedience to blindly accepted duty, in a cause which he little understands, in a plan of campaign of which he has no notion, under tactics of which he does not see the use" (16; see also 14-15, 68, 92, 179).

James was joined by Eugene V. Debs, Jane Addams, John Dewey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Louis Brandeis, Horace Kallen, and Randolph Bourne in opposing this view of patriotism, citizenship, and nationalism. Hansen constructs an interpretation of CP drawing principally upon the writings of the first five of these individuals. He constructs intellectual portraits of these major contributors and examines their differences. In order to clarify the definitive features of CP, Hansen differentiates it from two other perspectives on American identity opposed to the prevailing cultural chauvinism—the "universalist" positions of philosopher Morris Cohen and Israel Zangwill; and the "cultural pluralism" of

Kallen and Bourne. Hansen's analysis of the specific differences between Kallen on one hand, and Dewey, Addams, and Du Bois on the other, is outstanding. His thoughtful critique of Bourne's elitism may come as a surprise to admirers of Bourne. However, outlining the essential features of CP—the recovery of which is Hansen's central purpose—does not require reviewing his readings of individual proponents or his analysis of these other oppositional perspectives.

"The foremost aim of . . . cosmopolitan patriots," Hansen writes, "was to end the . . . conflation of citizenship with cultural homogeneity at the heart of American nationalism" (39). In this regard, proponents criticized the Anglo-Saxon arrogance of both organic nationalism and the cultural conservatism of E. A. Ross (92-94, 105-06). The trick for proponents of CP was to celebrate cultural diversity while offering republican and democratic means for achieving national cohesion and solidarity. Such a move rejected an ethnic or racial basis for American civic identity. Instead, adherents of CP argued that revitalization of a democratic-republican political culture could be and should be the basis of national solidarity. It was to be a culture founded upon such principles as the rule of law, individual autonomy, equal opportunity, and social justice (xiv-xvii, xx, 2, 4, 69, 75, 86, 114, 118, 128). Defined by commitment to such principles, it was neutral with respect to the cultural peculiarities of various ethnic and racial groups. Indeed the vitality and reproduction of this political culture required "cultural contact" and "common civic endeavors"—that is to say, democratic social reciprocity (74, 83-84, 112, 118, 126, 128, 215 nt. 215). The danger was that "a breakdown of the institution of reciprocal exchange [would allow] the influence of a single group or faction [to] hinder the self-realization of others" (75; see also 81). Contrary to organic nationalists, "the proper object of patriotic loyalty was not the American nation-state but the ideal of democratic social reciprocity for which the nation-state was a vehicle" (67; see also 70, 192 nt. 8).

What makes this view of patriotism "cosmopolitan"? Hansen's answer is threefold. First, CP proponents put forth a transnational global ethic. The defining principles of democratic republicanism should be the basis not only of national solidarity but of international relations and justice as well. Democratic social reciprocity founded upon mutual respect was considered a universal moral and political principle (xv, xvii, xx, 3, 4). Second, CP proponents recognized that "individuals maintain multiple overlapping . . . local, national, and international affiliations" (xvi; xiv-xv, vii, xxi, 93, 114). Multiple affiliations produced competing allegiances and loyalties—say, for example, between cultural or religious identification and the obligations of citizenship. Tensions, therefore, were unavoidable but Americans should "refuse to separate the privileges and immunities [they] enjoy from the plight of individuals and communities around the world" (xvii). Unlike some strains of cosmopolitanism, CPs did not devalue the importance of the citizen's sense of national belonging. Nevertheless, they pondered over the question of whether it "was possible to cultivate the community-forming aspects of national affiliation . . . without promoting the chauvinism that too often accompanied them" (93; see also xvii, 3, 112-13). Finally, proponents of

CP were cosmopolitan because their principle of democratic social reciprocity was based on a belief in “the equal moral standing of all human beings.” It was this normative belief in a common humanity, along with their affinity for Boas’s anthropology, that accounts for their rejection of the savagery-civilization dichotomy championed by Roosevelt (xvii, 3, 17-18, 33, 37).

In comparing the Hansen and Stromquist books it is important to recognize that Stromquist wants to establish the existence of a Progressive *movement*. By contrast, Hansen tells his readers, proponents of CP did not constitute a cohesive intellectual community, and none of them used the label, *cosmopolitan patriotism*. CP is Hansen’s label for a conception of patriotism abstracted from the proponents’ “independent but overlapping criticism” (xiv). Stromquist and Hansen can be compared more usefully by reflecting upon their respective treatments of liberalism. Stromquist traces the roots of twentieth century liberalism to the Progressive movement. In their rejection of “classical” or laissez-faire liberalism, progressives constructed a “new” liberalism more consonant with the emerging corporate reconstruction of the economy. It was still liberal in so far as it celebrated the sanctity of the individual; but the essential theme that unites progressivism with late twentieth century liberalism is a common rejection of both a class-based understanding of power and class-based politics.

For his part, Hansen provides the basis for a different and more nuanced conception of progressive, new liberalism. However, no such conception is developed in the book. It was indicated earlier that the “social reciprocity” endorsed by proponents of CP is not another name for the ideal of “social harmony” Stromquist thinks is definitive of progressivism. Moreover, the rejection of interest-group politics by James and Dewey put them outside Stromquist’s mainstream (72). What Dewey said of the identity politics implicit in Kallen’s cultural pluralism applies also to interest group politics: they both “merely perpetuated in group form America’s ‘legalistic individualism’ as hostile as militarism to genuine civic mindedness . . .” (118). Finally, the “social democratic ethic” at the core of CP pointed toward some form of statist redistribution. How else, proponents asked, could unacceptable levels of inequality be prevented and sufficient access to resources necessary for individual autonomy and self-realization be assured (xiv, 67, 115, 123)? In opposing E. A. Ross’s cultural conservatism, CP delineated “a model of liberal citizenship” and, along with the cultural pluralism of Kallen and Bourne, constituted “a [new] liberal front” (xiv, 93). Yet, the articulation of CP among diverse proponents represented one of those “occasional outbreaks of republicanism in what has been a predominantly liberal tradition” (187). Hansen considers the social and political criticism of CP proponents “republican” because of its “emphasis on a common good, [its] commitment to communally derived, impersonal standards of achievement, and [its] appreciation that vitality lay not in pursuit of luxury and leisure, but in the open-ended pursuit of excellence and in safeguarding individual autonomy” (69; 187). Clearly the new liberalism that informs CP is different from the new liberalism that interests Stromquist.

Apparently both historians fail to see the bifurcation of American new

liberalism into two strains during the period framing their narratives. Mary Furner's recent writings have contributed enormously to our understanding of these strains, which she labels "corporate liberalism" and "democratic statism" (see note 5). Both strains "provided *collectivist* alternatives to classical and neoclassical individualism."²⁶ Influenced by the writings of Martin Sklar, especially *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916* (1988), Furner argues that corporate liberalism was "a body of social theory and policy advice that left economic and social ordering largely to cooperative arrangements between organized private parties, agreeing voluntarily among themselves." By contrast, the other strain "was more democratic [and] statist . . . combin[ing] social purposes recovered from republicanism with a new, more positive conception of what the state could accomplish without itself becoming a threat to liberty."²⁷ Furner traces the republican roots of democratic statism to the ideals and labor theory of the producerist movement.²⁸ Her thesis is that these two strains of modern liberalism "set the parameters of political discourse from the 1880s to the New Deal."²⁹

There is clearly an affinity between corporate liberalism and Stromquist's progressive mainstream. Is there a corresponding affinity between democratic statism and proponents of CP? Robert Westbrook (see note 13) links democratic statism to the views of three principal CP proponents: Jane Addams, John Dewey, and Eugene Debs. Moreover, in a move that Stromquist would reject, Westbrook argues that Addams and Dewey contributed to the transformation of producer republicanism into the democratic-collectivist strain of new liberalism.³⁰

Stromquist has written an engaging synthesis of recent scholarship on the Progressive Era. Frezza's book is an ambitious, interdisciplinary history. Hansen's study is a major, but more narrowly focused, contribution. There remains to be done a project that would build upon Furner's conception of American new liberalism and integrate the insights of these three historians.

Notes

1. Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 164-65. For a discussion of the dominant prototype of professionalism and alternatives during the period that interests Muncy, see William M. Sullivan, *Work and Integrity: The Crisis and Promise of Professionalism in America*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

2. Van Wyck Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past" in *Van Wyck Brooks: The Early Years, 1908-1925* rev. ed., ed. by Claire Sprague (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 221-223. Casey Blake has traced the influence of Brooks's idea in Casey Nelson Blake, *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, & Lewis Mumford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

3. Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: The Uses of a Useable Past," and "The Frontier Thesis and the American Intellectual" in *Culture As History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973, 1984), 7-26, 27-38.

4. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955). The bibliography on American republicanism is vast but three early, groundbreaking books stand out: Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1969), and J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). For republicanism

among antebellum workers, see Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). The republican tradition becomes a tool of criticism in Robert N. Bellah et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) and Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

5. Mary O. Furner, "Structure and Virtue in United States Political Economy," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 27 (March 2005), 13-27 (quotation on p. 13); idem, "The Republican Tradition and the New Liberalism: Social Investigation, State Building, and Social Learning in the Gilded Age" in *The State and Social Investigation in Britain and the United States*, ed. Michael J. Lacey and Mary O. Furner (New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), 171-241; idem, "Social Scientists and the State: Constructing the Knowledge Base for Public Policy, 1880-1920," in *Intellectuals and Public Life: Between Radicalism and Reform*, ed. Leon Fink, Stephen T. Leonard, and Donald M. Reid (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 145-181. Other writers who have detected this cleavage in Progressive new liberalism include Eric Foner, *The Story of American Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 152-61, and Russell L. Hansen, *The Democratic Imagination in America: Conversations with Our Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 223-56.

6. James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain History: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Kloppenberg treats more explicitly the tensions between republicanism and liberalism in *The Virtues of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

7. Inclusive of the "labor progressives," this producerist legacy does not constitute, for Stromquist, a distinct strain of liberalism. Given his identification of modern liberalism with the dismissal of the importance of class divisions and class power in American society, this legacy should be considered anti-liberal.

8. The opposition between the independence or autonomy of the republican citizen and slavery is well stated in two accounts of the republican tradition: Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Iseult Honohan, *Civic Republicanism* (London: Routledge, 2002).

9. In his recognition of the republican roots of "the people," Stromquist draws on Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988). Morgan's title may have inspired Stromquist's own title.

10. Political scientist Charles Noble writes insightfully about the legacy of ethnic and racial prejudice among organized workers in the twentieth century. Charles Noble, *Welfare As We Knew It: A Political History of the American Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

11. Besides noting, as does Stromquist, the anti-immigrant attitudes of E. A. Ross and John R. Commons, Frezza expands further on their fear of the "race suicide" of white Anglo-Saxon stock" and their opposition to universal suffrage.

12. Relying upon the analyses of Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972) and David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the Twentieth Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), Frezza correctly locates these arguments in the years immediately after World War I. Bernstein traces their roots to the "Colorado Industrial Plan" or "Rockefeller Plan" proposed in 1915 (*Lean Years*, 160). Mary Furner attributes the idea of "class harmony" to a diverse body of corporate liberals even earlier, in the first decade of the twentieth century ("Republican Tradition," 186, 228-229).

13. Robert B. Westbrook, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 83-85. For a similar account of Debs see Hansen, *Lost Promise of Patriotism*, 60-63.

14. Frezza quotes Cooley's *Social Organization* (New York: C. Scribner's, 1909) at pp. 149-50.

15. John Dewey, "Human Nature and Conduct" in *The Middle Works of John Dewey: 1899-1924*, vol. 14, ed. by Jo Ann Boydson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 45.

16. Frezza mentions the objections of Albion Small and William McDougall but not those of Mead and Dewey (115).

17. Dewey, "Interpretation of Savage Mind," in *Middle Works*, vol. 2, 45, 41.

18. George Herbert Mead, "Cooley's Contribution to American Social Thought," *American Journal of Sociology* 35 (March 1930), 699.

19. Mead, "Social Psychology As Counterpart to Physiological Psychology," in *Selected Writings: George Herbert Mead*, ed. by Andrew J. Reck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 100.

20. Mead, "Cooley's Contribution," 699.

21. Dewey, "The Need For Social Psychology," in *The Middle Works*, vol. 10, 54-55, 60.

22. Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, 48; "Need For Social Psychology," 56.

23. Hansen sees his book as challenging the image of Progressivism as an exclusively "elite-driven, corporate-administrative push for social control" (xvii).

24. In *Civic Republicanism* (see note 8), Honohan differentiates “instrumental” from “strong” republicanism. These two strains bear a likeness to David Held’s differentiation of “protective” and “developmental” republicanism. The strong and developmental strains have the most affinity for democracy. See David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), chapter 2. Hansen writes: “By emphasizing the moral strenuousness of safeguarding democratic principles, the cosmopolitans disassociated republicanism from martial and patriarchal virtues, rendering republicanism itself more “democratic” (188). Instead, it could be said the cosmopolitans were drawing upon the more democratic strain of republicanism.

25. Although Hansen does not tell the reader what the model is, Roosevelt and Wilson would have joined President James K. Polk’s Secretary of the Treasury, Robert J. Walker in declaring “a higher than any earthly power . . . directs our destiny, impels us onward, and has selected our great and happy country as a model and ultimate centre of attraction for all the nations of the world” (quoted in Walter Lafeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989), 92.

26. Furner, “The Republican Tradition,” 175, 195.

27. *Ibid.*, 175-76, 185-86, 191, 194-96, 214.

28. *Ibid.*, 195, 214.

29. *Ibid.*, 176; see also 198.

30. Westbrook, *Democratic Hope*, 95-98.